

**281—56.40(82GA,SF2101) Award of technical assistance grants.**

**56.40(1) Awards.** Technical assistance grants may be used for specialized consulting services as determined necessary by the counselor, the business development specialist, and the client. Technical assistance grants may be awarded up to a maximum of \$10,000 per applicant. Specialized technical assistance may include, but is not limited to, market analysis; marketing plans; engineering, legal, and computer services; preliminary business plan development; financial packaging; and other consulting services that require specialized education and training.

**56.40(2) Award process.** Upon approval of the application by the counselor and the business development specialist, generally within 30 days, an applicant will receive notification of eligibility to pursue technical or financial assistance. The applicant must demonstrate the ability to contribute at least 50 percent of the start-up costs and the ability to cover any costs beyond \$10,000 if necessary. The business development specialist will identify if specialized services are needed and will provide recommendation for approval by the division or departmental staff.

**56.40(3) Approval of business plan feasibility study.** A business plan feasibility study indicating that the proposed business has a likelihood of success based upon the scoring will accompany notification letters. The business plan feasibility study will require an applicant to identify specific steps in the business planning process as well as who will be involved in each step of the process, address budgetary guidelines, and provide a timeline. The business plan feasibility study must be signed by the applicant and the business development specialist. Applicants receiving a score of 100 out of 125 points on the feasibility study will be recommended for technical or financial assistance or both.

**56.40(4) Technical assistance grant contracts.** The division shall negotiate contracts with qualified consultants for delivery of services to an applicant if specialized services are deemed necessary. The contracts shall state hourly fees for services, the type of service to be provided, and a timeline for delivery of services. Authorization of payment will be made by a counselor employed by the division or the department for the blind based upon the negotiated rate as noted in the business plan. A copy of each contract shall be filed with the division.

**56.40(5) Consultants.** Applicants will be provided a list of qualified business consultants by the business development specialist if specialized consultation services are necessary. The selection of consultant(s) shall be the responsibility of the applicant.

**56.40(6) Case management.** The business development specialist will commit a specific number of hours of direct consultation to each applicant to ensure that quality services for business planning are provided in a timely manner.